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Letter dated 24 September 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the twenty-fourth monthly report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex). The present letter covers the period from 23 August to 22 September 2015.

With respect to the destruction of the 12 chemical weapons production facilities, I note that five of the seven hangars have now been verified by OPCW as having been destroyed and that all five underground structures have been verified as destroyed. I likewise note the prevailing security situation that is impeding access to the final two hangars, as well as discussions between OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the contractor and the Syrian National Authority with regard to the procurement of additional explosives required for the destruction of the two hangars. The OPCW Declaration Assessment Team has now undertaken its eleventh visit to the Syrian Arab Republic, during which it continued technical consultations and interviews, including discussions on the analytical results of samples taken during previous site visits by the Team.

As I stated in my previous letter (S/2015/668), the activities of the OPCW fact-finding mission that is investigating allegations of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic are continuing. Following the completion of this work, the findings will be submitted to the OPCW Director-General, who will share them with the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. I take note of the intention of the Director-General to also include them in the monthly reports that are submitted to the Security Council.

On 27 August 2015, and in response to the request contained in Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), I submitted to the Council recommendations, including elements of the terms of reference, regarding the establishment and operation of an OPCW-United Nations joint investigative mechanism. On 9 September 2015, I then submitted a letter reaffirming several of those elements. In response to the letter of 10 September 2015 addressed to me by the President of the Security Council, authorizing the above-referenced recommendations, I have moved swiftly to appoint Virginia Gamba (Argentina) to head the independent three-member panel that will lead the Mechanism. Other activities, including the recruitment of core staff, are under way to ensure that the Mechanism is fully operational as soon as is feasible.

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It is my hope that the Joint Investigative Mechanism will serve as both a means to identify those responsible for the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as a deterrent to those who would contemplate their use. It must be clearly understood, through actions as well as through words, that there can be no justification for the use of such weapons, that such use is wholly unacceptable and that those responsible will be held accountable by the international community.

I would be grateful if you could urgently bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

Annex

Letter dated 23 September 2015 from the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled "Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme", prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 23 August to 22 September 2015 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

Note by the Director-General

Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.

2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities" (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation "in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1".

3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, also adopted a decision entitled "Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015).

4. This, the twenty-fourth monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions, and includes information relevant to the period from 23 August to 22 September 2015.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

5. Progress within the reporting period by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) While there were no new destruction activities at the 12 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) in the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period, five of the seven aircraft hangars have now been verified by the Secretariat as destroyed, with the latest being verified as destroyed on 8 September 2015. Two hangars remain inaccessible due to the security situation. At the time of reporting, the procurement of the additional explosives required for the destruction of those hangars was being discussed between the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the contractor, and the Syrian National Authority. As reported previously, the Secretariat has verified all five underground structures as destroyed.

(b) On 17 September 2015, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its twenty-second monthly report (EC-80/P/NAT.3, dated 17 September 2015) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

(c) The Syrian authorities have continued to extend the necessary cooperation in accordance with the implementation of subparagraph 1(e) of EC-M-33/DEC.1 and paragraph 7 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

6. Significant progress has been made in destroying all the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic, which were removed from its territory in 2014. A combined total of 98.8% of all declared chemical weapons has been verified as destroyed, which includes the isopropanol previously destroyed in the Syrian Arab Republic, 100% of the Category 1 chemicals, and 93.7% of the Category 2 chemicals. Also, facilities in Finland and Germany have destroyed all effluents produced by the neutralisation process of sulfur mustard and DF that took place on board the United States vessel MV Cape Ray. A total of 48.7% of the Category 2 chemical hydrogen fluoride (HF) has been destroyed. Having now ensured the safe storage of the badly corroded HF cylinders, Veolia ES Technical Solutions, LLC in the United States of America is making the final preparations to implement the selected technical solution that will allow for the safe processing of the remaining cylinders and the destruction of the HF contained inside. The Secretariat will continue to brief States Parties in The Hague on this activity, which is expected to commence in October 2015 and to be completed before the end of the year.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

7. Two OPCW staff members were deployed as part of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic as at the cut-off date of this report. In view of the need to procure additional explosives to destroy the last two CWPFs, it is expected that the completion date for the destruction of the last CWPF will be extended to 31 October 2015. The tripartite agreement between UNOPS, the OPCW, and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the contribution agreement between the OPCW and UNOPS, which supports the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, will be amended accordingly.

8. In accordance with the tripartite agreement, a meeting of the Steering Committee attended by representatives of the OPCW, UNOPS, and the Syrian Arab Republic was held in Beirut on 27 August 2015. During the meeting, options for procuring additional explosives for the destruction of the remaining two CWPFs were discussed. The meeting also addressed the modalities required to ensure the security of the remote monitoring systems that have been installed at four underground structures and will operate for five years from the date of destruction of the CWPFs.

9. The Director-General has continued to communicate with senior representatives of the States Parties hosting a destruction facility or providing assistance with the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, and with senior officials of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. As requested by the Council at its Seventy-Fifth Session (paragraph 7.12 of EC-75/2, dated 7 March 2014), the Secretariat, on behalf of the Director-General, has continued to brief States Parties in The Hague on its activities.

10. The Secretariat and the Syrian authorities have maintained their ongoing cooperation on outstanding issues regarding the Syrian initial declaration, as encouraged by the Council at its Seventy-Sixth Session (paragraph 6.17 of EC-76/6, dated 11 July 2014). During its eleventh visit to the Syrian Arab Republic, which occurred from 28 August to 12 September 2015, the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continued its technical consultations and interviews with key principals from

the Syrian chemical weapons programme, including discussions with the Syrian authorities on the analytical results of the samples taken during the DAT's previous site visits. Additional samples taken during the DAT's eleventh visit were handed over to Syrian National Authority representatives in Damascus and will be transported to the OPCW in the near future for dispatch to designated laboratories for analysis.

Supplementary resources

11. The total contributions of EUR 50.3 million in the Syria Trust Fund for the Destruction of Chemical Weapons and the contributors thereto remain unchanged from the previous report.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

12. The Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) is continuing its work involving the analysis of information collected during its latest missions. Upon completion of this work, the findings will be submitted to the Director-General, who will subsequently share the results with States Parties and also include them in the monthly reports that are submitted to the United Nations Security Council, as required under EC-M-48/DEC.1.

13. As required under United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) on the establishment of a United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism, on 27 August 2015 the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council his recommendations, formulated in coordination with the Director-General. On 10 September 2015, the Security Council authorised those recommendations, including elements of Terms of Reference. Organisational and other arrangements necessary for the speedy establishment and full functioning of the Joint Investigative Mechanism are currently under way.

Conclusion

14. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will continue to be on the destruction of the two remaining aircraft hangars. The DAT and the FFM will also continue their work in the Syrian Arab Republic, while arrangements are being made to make the Joint Investigative Mechanism fully operational.